



HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION



Quality First!

Quality First is Arizona's new statewide voluntary quality improvement and rating system. It establishes the foundation for quality early care and education for child care centers and family child care homes which serve children birth through age 5. Quality First provides support, funding and education to qualified centers and homes to improve the quality of their care and education so children can begin school safe, healthy and ready to succeed. In the future a rating system will be implemented to assist families in choosing quality child care.

The components of Quality First include:

- On-site, intensive coaching to develop and implement quality improvement plans
- Pre-and-post assessment to determine the level of quality prior to and after receiving support
- Financial resources to reach goals in quality improvement plan and to improve quality
- Professional development scholarships for teachers and caregivers
- Child care health consultation to ensure the health and safety of children in centers and homes

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$6.2 million

First Things First Regional Funding: \$10.5 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$16.7 million toward improved quality for children and families

Progress to Date: Over 600 centers and homes have been enrolled or selected for participation in Quality First.

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® ARIZONA

T.E.A.C.H. ARIZONA is a comprehensive scholarship program that provides individuals who work in early childhood centers and homes with access to college coursework leading to a degree or certificate in early childhood education. T.E.A.C.H. ARIZONA promotes quality early childhood care and education by establishing a well-qualified, equitably paid and stable workforce for Arizona's young children. **The following are components of T.E.A.C.H. ARIZONA:**

Educational scholarships: support for tuition and books, a travel stipend and paid release time

- Compensation: incentives in the form of a bonus or raise upon completion of college coursework
- Continuity of care: commitment by participant to continue working at current program for a specified period of time

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$1.5 million

First Things First Regional Funding: \$3.8 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$5.3 million for qualified teachers and caregivers for Arizona's children

Progress to Date: Scholarships are available to early childhood staff through state funding in conjunction with Quality First participation and through regional funding. Over 500 scholarships have been awarded for the 2009-2010 school year.



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Child Care Health Consultation

Child care health consultants (CCHCs) are child health experts who consult with child care settings. Their role is to provide child care staff the information and guidance they need to prevent and intervene appropriately to assure the health and safety of children in care. **CCHCs serve as health resources to early care and education settings through:**

- Onsite, email and telephone guidance and consultation
- Staff training on health and safety best practices and requirements
- Nutrition and physical activities to promote health and prevent obesity
- Referrals to community resources

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$1.0 million

First Things First Regional Funding: \$9.9 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$10.9 million to keep children healthy, safe and ready to succeed

Progress to Date: County and Tribal health departments employ CCHCs, with Pima County Health Department serving as the administrative home to provide recruitment, training and quality assurance. CCHCs and Coaches coordinate to provide services and support to participating Quality First centers and homes. Regional funds also support access to CCHC by non-Quality First programs. Twenty nine contracts with county health departments or community health agencies have been completed.

FTF Professional REWARD\$

To build an educated and stable early childhood education workforce and improve quality, low teacher salaries must be addressed. Improved compensation will encourage early childhood staff to improve their education and remain in the field, resulting in higher quality and more stable care for young children. **This salary and retention strategy includes:**

- Financial incentives to teachers and caregivers based on educational achievement, wages earned and hours worked per week
- Commitment from staff to remain in current employment

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$222,000

First Things First Regional Funding: \$2.75 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$3.1 million for a more educated and stable early childhood workforce

Progress to Date: An administrative home was selected and is working with FTF to make financial incentives available to early childhood staff by July 2010.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES & HEALTHY CHILDREN



Arizona Parent Kits

Arizona Parent Kits provide information and education to all parents of newborns in the state. They are distributed to parents upon discharge from the hospital. **The Parent Kit includes:**

- 6 DVDS/videos on prenatal care, child health and nutrition, child development, child safety, quality child care, early literacy and discipline
- 80-page Arizona Parents Guide
- Picture book for parents to read to their baby

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$500,000

First Things First Regional Funding: \$206,000

First Things First Total Funding: \$706,000 for valuable information support for Arizona families

Progress to Date: Parent Kits are being distributed to families with newborns at all birthing hospitals or centers in Arizona. Monitoring and evaluation activities have been initiated to determine the uses and benefits of the Kits once provided to families.

Health: Physician Education and Outreach

Physician education and outreach improves the quality of health care for young children by providing technical assistance and support to medical practices throughout Arizona, including pediatric practices, family medicine, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Indian and Tribal Health facilities. **This quality improvement strategy includes:**

- Implementation of best practices, including a medical home model of care
- Use of developmental screening using a standardized, validated screening tool
- Promotion of systems that track children referred to early intervention services
- Assisting practices in identifying community resources that support child development

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$270,000 to improve 50 physician practices serving young children

Progress to Date: An administrative home was selected and has begun implementation.

Health: Therapist Workforce Support and Readiness

The health workforce strategy establishes a partnership with Arizona State University's speech language pathology program to increase the number of therapists with the specialized knowledge and skills to work with children birth to three in early intervention programs. **Components of this program are:**

- Scholarships for tuition to complete a master's level program
- Commitment of two years of service with birth to three populations in Arizona
- Specialized coursework for currently practicing therapists and other early intervention personnel

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$275,000

Progress to Date: Through a contract between FTF and ASU, a new cohort of 11 students have enrolled in ASU's speech language program. This program will provide experiences and curricula specific to children birth to three.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES & HEALTHY CHILDREN

Health: Oral Health Care Demonstration

Oral health care is a pressing need for young children. This state funding will support a collaboration between FTF and DHS to expand “teledentistry” in rural and hard to serve areas of the state. Regional funds support dental services for young children such as varnish and dental screening.

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$50,000

First Things First Regional Funding: \$1.6 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$1.65 million to create a plan to improve oral health care for children birth to five

Progress to Date: Discussions are underway with the professional dental associations, dentistry schools and state agencies to form a planning task force.

Mental Health Education and Consultation

In Arizona there is a shortage of licensed mental health clinicians (psychiatrist, psychologists, clinical social workers and mental health therapists) who have specialized expertise to work with infants and toddlers, their families and their child care providers. This administrative home will support the development of a mental health consultation system and continuing education courses to maintain and update practitioner skills and knowledge in this field. **This strategy supports:**

- An administrative home to support mental health consultation for early childhood programs
- Scholarships for tuition costs at approved in-state early childhood mental health institutes which lead to a credential or endorsement
- Commitment of scholarship recipients to work with birth to three populations in Arizona
- Continuing education opportunities within the community

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$230,000

First Things First Regional Funding: \$2 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$2.2 million to promote healthy social-emotional development of young children

Progress to Date: An administrative home was selected and has been working with FTF to provide mental health consultation to early care and education in those regions funding the strategy.

Workforce Recruitment

Stipends/Loan forgiveness and many rural areas of Arizona lack health professionals, such as pediatricians, therapists, and family practice doctors. This strategy provides stipends or loan forgiveness to health professionals who commit to practice in particular regions.

First Things First Statewide Funding: \$1.4 million

First Things First Total Funding: \$1.4 million to increase the number of health professionals in under served areas.

Progress to Date: FTF is collaborating with the Department of Health Services who will administer the program.